

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Rep. Mike Honda (CA-15) was a key player in securing a major victory for America's legal immigrants by ensuring that their children will now receive health insurance. The victory was part of H.R. 2, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) Reauthorization bill, passed today by the US House of Representatives.

Rep. Honda, chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), along with leaders of the Congressional Black and Hispanic Caucuses, pushed to include a provision in the bill allowing states to waive the five-year waiting period for Medicaid and SCHIP imposed on pregnant women and children legally residing in the US.

Previously, all newly-arrived, lawfully-present immigrants were barred for five years from access to health care under the critical federal programs, Medicaid and SCHIP. The language included originated from the Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act, introduced in the 110th Congress.

In response to the passage of H.R. 2, Rep. Honda commented, "Legal immigrants pay taxes like everyone else, send their sons and daughters to serve in our armed forces – it seems the least we can do is to provide basic health insurance to children and pregnant women. This is also smart policy since many of early child illnesses are preventable."

The constituents in Rep. Honda's district understand the need for child health insurance all too well. Santa Clara County was the first in the nation to ensure that every child with parents at or below 300% of the federal poverty level has real access to regular health care as a result of being insured. The county's Children's Health Initiative, which currently covers immigrant children, raised its own money to add to state and federal funding in order to keep all children healthy. Last year, the program enrolled over 144,000 children and serves as a model for 17 other California counties.

"Now," said Rep. Honda, "Santa Clara County faces the possibility of deep cuts in our healthcare system totaling nearly \$100 million. California's budget woes limit the assistance it can provide, so with the reauthorization of SCHIP, the financial burden on the county will be alleviated. I'm proud to vote today for legislation that will provide our program and our county's children with much needed stability for the next four and a half years."

"The passage of this bill protects the health of millions of American children. It is the first step in a long journey toward repairing our healthcare system and providing universal coverage, care, and access to the people of our nation, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to complete that journey. I urge the Senate to act in as swift and responsible manner as we do today and pass this bill."